



THE VALLEY PATRIOT

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EACH SERGEANT: \$21,728

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VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

Ed Girroir, U.S. Army Paratrooper and Firefighter

John Cuddy

VALLEY PATRIOT HERO REPORTER

HAVERHILL - During World War II, Haverhill's Ed Girroir enlisted in the US Army after Pearl Harbor, with most of his friends doing the same. He served as a Paratrooper with the US Army, in the European Theatre. He was on Active

duty, from 1944 to 1946, assigned to the 517th Airborne Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT).

While serving in the 517th, Ed and his brother Soldiers were required to qualify as "expert" with their individually issued weapon, "sharpshooter" with another infantry table of allowance (TAO) weapon, and "marksman" with all crew-

served weapons assigned to his platoon's TAO. The 517th troopers were the first paratroopers to wear the steel combat helmet in jump training; until these men jumped in US Army issued steel helmets, a modified football helmet had been used during jump training. Under the command of Colonel (later Major General) Louis Walsh Jr, a Veteran of early campaigns in the Pacific, physical conditioning was paramount within the unit.

Colonel Walsh's emphasis on fitness saved many men's lives, as the unit was part of some of the bloodiest fighting in Europe. The 517th participating in the campaigns in Italy, Operation Dragoon, which included a combat jump on August 15th, 1944, at 3am. Later they fought in the Belgian towns of Soy, Sur-Les-Hys, Hotton, and Manhay, trying to turn the Germans back at the Battle of the Bulge. Following the Battle of the Bulge, the 517th PIR was assigned to the 13th Airborne Division, to take part in Operation Varsity, the airborne crossing of the Rhine River. However, prior to the operation, the 13th's participation in the attack was called off. The 517th, then attached to the 17th Airborne Division, was slated to take part in Operation Coronet, the airborne invasion of the Japanese Home Islands, which was also called off after V-J Day.

It is easy to see why they are called the Greatest Generation! From the unit's own website, "the 517th Parachute



Regimental Combat Team accumulated over 150 combat days during five campaigns on battlefields in Italy, France, Belgium and Germany".

The team's casualty rate was 81.9 percent. The Team suffered 1,576 wounded in action casualties and had 247 men killed in action. Not included in these figures are injuries from accidents, the cold, or injury caused by other harsh field conditions.

One of the men in Ed's unit, PFC Melvin E. Biddle B/1/517th PIR was awarded the Congressional Medal of HERO: PAGE 20

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Hypocrisy in North Andover, “Ignoring the Health Experts”

Last month, attendees at North Andover Town Meeting overwhelmingly voted to ban the use of plastic bags for all businesses in town over a certain size.

When we say the vote was overwhelming, we mean the measure won by more than 90%.

Citizen after citizen (many still wearing masks three years after COVID) took to the microphone talking about the “science” of “climate change” and how we are going to save the planet by banning plastic bags in one town.

For the last three years Democrats have used every scare tactic imaginable to get people to wear cloth masks that don’t stop the transmission of COVID and take vaccines that have never been proven effective.

“TRUST THE HEALTH EXPERTS”

they screamed at us any time someone questioned their demands.

Here at the local level the mask obsessed lunatics

So, it seemed like a stunning display of arrogance and hypocrisy at North Andover’s Annual Town Meeting last month as the local Democrats

Focusing on Your Kids Mental Health

Ryan Hamilton

STATE REP., LAWRENCE/HAVERHILL

As we look back on the month of May as Mental Health Awareness Month, I want to highlight one of my legislative priorities for this session – youth mental health.

Our young people are facing staggering rates of poor mental health, made only worse by the isolating effects of the pandemic. In 2020, 48% of 14 to 24-year-olds reported feeling so hopeless and sad that they stopped engaging in regular activities such as school, sports, and extracurriculars. Rates of suicidal thoughts have risen significantly, with around 14% of high school-aged students reporting serious consideration of taking their own life.

For some communities, this rate is even higher, with almost 1 in 5 girls and more than 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ youth in Massachusetts reporting severe suicidal thoughts.

Our youth mental health crisis is clearer than ever, and action at the local, state, and federal levels is sorely needed.

Locally, the communities of Methuen and Haverhill are addressing this issue by tackling access to mental health care in our schools.

I am proud to announce that I have secured \$50,000 in the House’s FY24 budget for mental health services and programming at Methuen High School.

While this is only a component of the more extensive mental health support system needed, efforts locally to support students and connect parents with mental health resources are critical to the health and well-being of young people.

At the state level, I have filed three bills that target the dire need for more mental health professionals in our schools.

H.494, An Act providing for mental health professionals in public schools, would require school districts to employ at least one school psychologist and one full-time social worker for all public schools, K-12.

H.465, An Act establishing Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, which I co-filed with Rep.

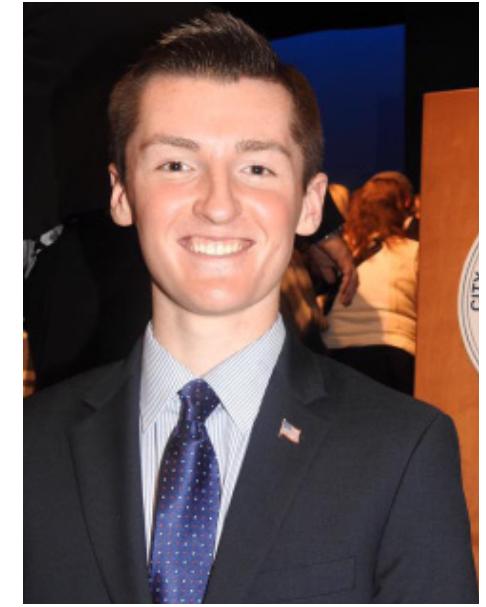
Carol Doherty (D-Taunton), ensures that public schools develop and implement counseling programs and establishes a counselor-to-student ratio of at least one licensed school counselor for every 250 students.

And finally, HD.4357, an Act expanding licensure opportunities for school counselors, which was co-filed with Rep. Andy Vargas (D-Haverhill) in the House and Sen. Pavel Payano (D-Lawrence) in the Senate.

This legislation streamlines the dual-license process for school counselors to become licensed mental health counselors, focusing on the reality that many counselors often provide mental health care without adequate support or full licensure.

I filed these bills because I know that mental health is a significant concern in our community, especially for parents and family members at a loss for who to turn to for help.

These bills outline a comprehensive system for creating educational settings in which kids are supported in learning not only English and math, but about



the importance of socioemotional skills and the value of their mental health.

As a national leader in education and youth engagement, it is time for Massachusetts to take action on the mental health crisis in our schools and throughout our communities.

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Part of My Job is Community Engagement

Francisco Paulino
STATE REP., LAWRENCE/METHUEN

Dear Constituents,
As your State Representative, I am privileged to play an active role in our community's vibrant life.

Today, I want to share with you some pivotal moments that have recently underscored our shared commitment to hope, safety, and honor - the graduation ceremonies at Methuen and Lawrence High, the Massachusetts Nurses Association's protest at Dana Faber in Methuen, my service as a volunteer crossing guard in our district, and the profound privilege of participating in the Memorial Day parade.

Experiencing the graduation ceremonies of Methuen and Lawrence High was a testament to the future's bright promise. The sight of our young graduates, ready to carve out their unique paths in the world, is a vivid reminder of our shared responsibility to create and foster opportunities for these emerging leaders.

Parallel to this, the Massachusetts Nurses Association's protest at Dana Faber highlighted a critical need within our healthcare system. Advocating for equitable pay for nurses across our

state is a matter of urgency, and I am committed to supporting our nurses in this cause. Addressing the nursing shortage is not merely a local issue; it is a matter of national security that calls for immediate action.

A central facet of my role as your representative is proactive community engagement. That's why I served as a volunteer crossing guard at every school in our district. This first-hand experience has offered invaluable insights into our children's safety on their school routes and underlined the areas where we need to enhance our existing safeguards.

As a member of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, I plan to funnel these insights into a comprehensive safety assessment. The goal is to identify strategies to make our schools safer across Massachusetts, thereby ensuring every child enjoys a secure learning environment.

Our responsibilities extend beyond the school year. During the summer break, our children need safe and stimulating spaces to play, learn, and socialize. I am dedicated to creating such environments for every child in Methuen and Lawrence to ensure their continued growth during this important time.

The privilege of participating in the



Because she missed The Valley Patriot's 19th Anniversary BASH last March, Vanessa Sanchez was presented with the Valley Patriot's Phil Glendye Scholarship at the Lawrence High Alumni Dinner in the amount of \$5,700. Above are: State Representative Francisco Paulino with Karen Glendye, Vanessa Sanchez and Valley Patriot publisher Tom Duggan. The Lawrence High Alumni Association gave out more than \$150,000 this year at their annual dinner.

Memorial Day parade was another poignant reminder of our shared commitment to honor and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Their courage and dedication to our nation are a beacon for us all, guiding us in our efforts to build a more equitable, safer, and prosperous community.

As we celebrate our graduates, advocate for our nurses, ensure our children's safety, and honor our brave service members, we remember that our actions today shape our shared future. I am humbled to serve you in these endeavors and eagerly anticipate continuing our journey together.

Yours in service,
Franciaco.paulino@mahouse.gov

Supremes Rule Home Equity Theft Unconstitutional

Joyce & Gracemarie Tomaselli
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNISTS

Last month the U.S. Supreme Court justices unanimously ruled that home equity theft by government entities is unconstitutional, securing an individual's right to just compensation when their property is confiscated and sold in a tax foreclosure.

"This decision affirms that property rights are fundamental and don't depend solely on state law. The court's ruling makes clear that home equity theft is not only unjust, but unconstitutional," said Christina Martin, a Pacific Legal Foundation lawyer.

For years Pacific Legal Foundation has argued that home equity theft—when governments satisfy property tax debt by taking a person's home, selling it, and keeping more than the amount owed—violates the Fifth Amendment's prohibition on taking property without compensation.

the case originated when Geraldine Tyler, a 94 year-old grandmother, failed to pay her property taxes of \$2,300.

The government started tacking on thousands of dollars in interest, fees, and other penalties until her total bill reached \$15,000.

When Tyler failed to pay the debt, Hennepin County, Minnesota, seized her condo and sold it at auction for \$40,000. Instead of keeping the \$15,000 owed and refunding Geraldine the sale surplus, the county kept all \$40,000, essentially pocketing a \$25,000 windfall at Ms. Tyler's expense.

The Pacific Legal Foundation then brought her case to the Supreme Court. According to their research, home equity

theft predominantly occurs in lower-income and minority areas. Older adults also face a disproportionate risk of falling victim to home equity theft; home equity theft is legal in Massachusetts and 11 other states and DC, they have robbed homeowners of nearly 9,000 homes and more than \$860 million in life savings from 2014 to 2021.

The justices concluded unanimously that Geraldine Tyler can pursue her argument against Hennepin County's decision to keep the surplus as it violated the takings clause of the Constitution's Fifth Amendment. That Clause requires that the government pay just compensation when property is taken.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote, in a reference to a passage from the Bible, that taxpayers are only required to pay the government what it is owed.

"The taxpayer must render unto Caesar what is Caesar's but no more," he wrote. By keeping the \$25,000 surplus amount, the county "effected a 'classic taking in which the government directly appropriates private property for its own use.'"

Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, joined by Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, issued a concurring opinion that explored another possible ground for ruling in Ms. Tyler's favor: the Eighth Amendment's prohibition of "excessive fines." See *Tyler v. Hennepin County, Minn.*, May 26, 2023, SCOTUS No. 22-166.

HOW DOES THIS EFFECT LOCAL LAND TAKINGS?

This case hits home with us because we too, lost our home & restaurant (Mangia at, Salisbury Beach, MA) because the Town did the same thing to

us; the Town of Salisbury auctioned our property for \$775,000 and didn't give us a penny!

This tax taking was the direct result of sewer charges that government documents prove we never owed in the first place. We had paid off our mortgage and thousands in taxes and licenses.

Because the town revoked all our 1995 restaurant licenses, overnight, because of sewer bills that we later discovered was never owed in the first place. This started our financial devastation. Although we tried for many years to reopen, and the town admitted that they made errors in their tax billing, they would not correct the bills or give us our licenses.

We paid the Town of Salisbury an additional \$15,492.04 check to bring us current in 2002, the Town accepted it, didn't cash it and proceeded with Land Court. Kopelman & Paige (now KP Law) Town Counsel cancelled our meeting with the Department of Revenue scheduled to waive the interest because the Town made errors in their sewer charges and real estate taxes. (<https://valleypatriot.com/why-did-salisbury-refuse-to-cash-15k-check-from-tomaselli-sisters/>)

The Tax Taking amount was \$45,763.28 comprised mostly of sewer charges for the building lot and \$4,351.62 sewer betterment for the marsh lot that did not have a sewer, plus 16% interest from 2001 until 2015, plus Town's legal fees amounted to \$250,889.32.

For years we tried to have the Town correct their billing errors so that we could pay what we rightfully owed, get current and reopen Mangia.

Through these many years, we went



to numerous courts to have the sewer bills corrected but to no avail because the Town attorneys KP Law, and Coppola and Coppola, misstated facts, and concealed evidence to mislead judges in order to win and take our property - that is how they won!

We commend the Supreme Court justices for doing the right thing in *Tyler v. Hennepin County, Minn.* case.

With the hope of helping others and because of the anguish that we have had for three (3) decades, we petitioned two (2) State Senate Bills currently pending hearings.

The first: Senate Bill S. 1131 'An Act to Strengthen rules governing attorney conduct; penalties for misconduct'.

and

Senate Bill S. 1326 'An Act to provide clarification to Mass General Laws for betterments with regard to sewer projects.'

Championing Investments in Downtown Revitalization and Local Priorities

Pavel Payano

STATE SENATOR, 1ST ESSEX DISTRICT

On Thursday, May 25th, the Massachusetts Senate approved a comprehensive budget of \$55.9 billion for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), signaling the Commonwealth's commitment to fiscal discipline and the long-term economic well-being of the state. With a focus on equity and opportunity, the Senate's budget delivers historic levels of investment in various sectors, including education, housing, regional transportation, health care, workforce development, and climate preparedness.

During a spirited debate process, the Senate approved 478 amendments, adding \$82.2 million in spending to the budget. I played a vital role in advocating for local priorities and securing funding for critical projects in our district. Notably I was able to successfully champion a \$600,000 allocation for the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, which will provide municipalities with technical assistance to promote vibrant, walkable downtowns with a mix of commercial and residential uses, cultural amenities, and accessible public transportation.

In addition to the downtown revitalization initiative, I also secured funding for several local organizations and projects. These include \$125,000 for the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center's Dyeworks Project, \$120,000 for MAN Inc., \$50,000

each for Lazarus House and MakeIT Haverhill, \$40,000 for Hispanic Image and Debbie's Treasure Chest, \$30,000 for the Latino Coalition of Haverhill, \$25,000 for Food for World, Inc., and \$20,000 for Somebody Cares New England.

I am proud to have advocated for critical funding for the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative and several local priorities. These investments will promote economic growth, create vibrant communities, and improve the quality of life for residents in our district."

The Senate's FY24 budget recommends a total spending of \$55.8 billion, representing a \$3.4 billion increase compared to the previous fiscal year. The budget is based on a tax revenue estimate of \$40.41 billion for FY24, including an additional \$1 billion from the new Fair Share surtax. This surtax, approved by voters in November 2022, imposes a 4 percent tax on annual income above \$1 million, with the revenue directed towards enhancing the state's education and transportation sectors.

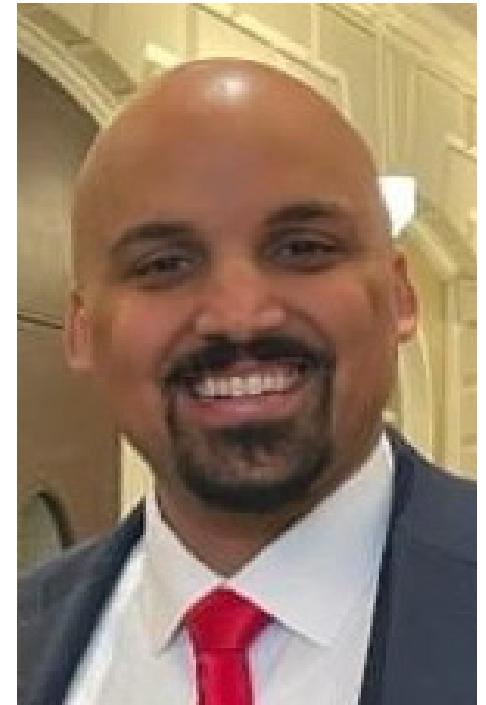
To ensure transparency and accountability, the Senate's budget establishes an Education and Transportation Fund, dedicated to accounting for the Fair Share funds in an open manner. This fund will track the revenue collected from the surtax and ensure its allocation aligns with the ballot initiative's intention of improving public education and transportation systems.

Education remains a top priority in the Senate's FY24 budget, with a historic investment of \$1.5 billion in early education and care. This represents the largest-ever annual appropriation for early education and care in Massachusetts history. The funding aims to support early education providers, the workforce, and make quality education more accessible and affordable for all.

By allocating \$1.5 billion to early education and care, we are investing in the future of our children and strengthening the economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth. This funding will support providers, prioritize accessibility, and maintain operational support to ensure high-quality education for our youngest learners.

The Senate's budget also commits to fully funding and implementing the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) by FY 2027, investing \$6.59 billion in Chapter 70 funding for K-12 education. This represents a substantial increase of \$604 million over FY 2023, as well as doubling the minimum Chapter 70 aid from \$30 to \$60 per pupil. The investment ensures that all school districts in Massachusetts have the necessary resources to deliver high-quality educational opportunities to students.

Furthermore, the Senate's budget lays the foundation for free community college for all students starting in Fall 2024. With an allocation of \$55 million, the budget



aims to build capacity and accelerate the implementation of this milestone initiative. It also includes \$40 million for free community college programs for students aged 25 or older and students pursuing nursing degrees, addressing critical workforce needs across the state.

Health care and housing were key areas of focus in the Senate's budget. With a total allocation of \$19.93 billion, MassHealth will continue providing affordable and comprehensive health care services to over 2.3 million people in Massachusetts. The budget also

PAYANO: PAGE 13



Back Row: Greater Lawrence Italian Women's Club Co-President Carol DiStefano; Brooke Paris, Ayva Morton, Sophia Pierce, Christopher Bullock, Kyler Shea, Kylie Laskey, Michaela Henrick and Greater Lawrence Italian Women's Club Scholarship Committee member, Linda Small. Front row: Robert Troy, Rachel Cordio, Rory Smith, Brooke Tardugno and Davin Indeglia. Missing from photo: Maggie Cosentino, Liam Trundy and Domenic Miller

Gr. Lawrence Italian Women's Club Grants Scholarships to 15 Local Students

The Greater Lawrence Italian Women's Club, which is proud to be celebrating its 90th year, awarded 15 scholarships at their May 2nd meeting at Salvatore's Restaurant in Lawrence. The recipients were Seniors at area high schools and will be furthering their education at various colleges. The recipients were chosen by the Scholarship Committee based on their academic achievement, participation in community services, school activities, teacher recommendations and being of Italian descent. The Club meets on the first Tuesday in October, November, December, March, April, and May. The money was raised for these scholarships by holding a December calendar raffle (which included donations of gift cards from area businesses, theme baskets, gift cards, monetary donations and other items from club members), 50/50 raffles at the club's meetings, donations by members of theme baskets that were raffled off and donations in memory of deceased club members. Anyone interested in more information about the club or becoming a member can access our website at GLIWC.org or our Facebook (Greater Lawrence Italian Women's Club). ♦

Business is Growing in Lawrence and Methuen

Estela Reyes

STATE REP., LAWRENCE/METHUEN

I want the Valley Patriot readers to know this month, that having the opportunity to write this column has been really helpful in serving the taxpayers of Methuen and Lawrence.

This column helps me relay important information to the public about what is going on in the state legislature and also gives you an opportunity to reach me and share your concerns.

Since taking office in January, I have been really excited to meet so many people in Methuen who need help with various issues involving state services and state funding for local area projects.

I want to make it clear that anyone who would like the opportunity to meet with me on any issue will be able to do so whether you live in Lawrence or Methuen. If you would like to schedule a meeting with me you can contact my aide and work out a convenient time and location.

Over the last month, I have been getting into the full swing of House session. That means I have been primarily in committee hearings to consider the thousands of bills filed earlier this year. You see, once a bill is filed with the House of Representatives, the journey through the legislative process is long and complicated.

Each bill must go before sub-committees where the details and legality of proposed legislation are discussed and worked out.

So far, most of the hearings I have been involved with have been on; the Committee on Consumer Protection & Professional Licensure (CPPL), and the Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight (SARO).

Here in the community, I am encouraged by the sheer number of new businesses opening their doors throughout Lawrence and Methuen. It is a good sign for our local economy, and I have been working very closely with local officials to increase incentives for locally owned small businesses to open here in the valley.

It is also important to create a stable economic environment for existing businesses to remain in the valley and not be lured away by other officials outside the valley. The longevity of locally owned businesses in the area is particularly commendable given the recent downturns in the economy from COVID and the Columbia Gas explosions.

I am particularly proud to have been able to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of Enterprise Bank's Methuen location on Broadway. It is clear to me that both Lawrence and Methuen are thriving cities for businesses to operate.

I promise to be the best possible partner for economic progress not only



for businesses in my district but in the community as a whole.

I have always firmly believed that you cannot help working families and individual laborers better their lives by attacking their employers and

penalizing the businesses who pay their salaries.

If you are interested in meeting with me on any state issues, please reach out to my aide Thomas.Baranowski@mahouse.gov ◊

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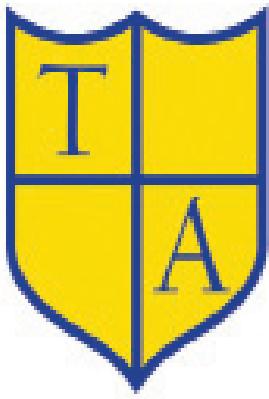
Make your Own Seafood Combo

The image shows a large sign for "SHAKING SEAFOOD" with a crab logo. Below the sign are three photographs of seafood dishes: a tray of crab legs, a tray of mussels and shrimp, and a tray of shrimp and sausage.

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Weather 101 with Al Kaprielian

Summer Solstice

Welcome to June and the month with the summer solstice which officially marks the season of summer. On the summer solstice the vertical rays of the sun are over the tropic of cancer. This is the furthest north the vertical rays of the sun get.

After the summer solstice the vertical rays of the sun start to move south towards the equator. As this occurs the hours of daylight begin to decrease causing the days to become shorter with the nights becoming longer. During June, the sun angle is at its highest point in the sky. So, if you are at the beach or spending a long time outside make sure you are protected by the sun's rays by applying sunscreen. Also, during this month and the following summer months of July and August make sure you drink plenty of water and stay hydrated. Also, this summer when the hot and humid weather occurs make sure you wear lightweight clothing, shorts, and tee shirts.

Also, it's good to wear light color clothing during the summer because light colors absorb less heat from the sun versus dark colors. Recapping May we averaged above normal with temperatures and slightly below normal for rainfall. There were some cool days and chilly nights during May. During the latter part of the month, we got some hot days though humidity levels stayed



low. The dewpoint which refers to the amount of moisture in the air stayed under 60 for almost the entire month. Boston only had two days this past May where the dewpoint reached 60 or higher. Last May 2022 Boston had twelve days where the dewpoint reached 60 or higher. The hottest day in May was on the 28th where many areas away from the coast

WEATHER: PAGE 11

WILLS & TRUSTS ARE WHAT WE DO!!!

Every day when we walk out the door, there is always the possibility that it may be our "last" time. You wouldn't walk out the door without your wallet; if you fail to plan for your Family's future, that's exactly what you may be doing.



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VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

You can hear the iconic music all ready, can't you: dee, dee, DEE, dee. Such is life in a small bucolic hamlet in northeastern Massachusetts, but appearances can be deceiving when the light is dim. A dim light from the twilight zone. Let us cast a brighter light on the zoning bylaw review by this municipality.

The story started back in 1985 when the current zoning bylaws were adopted at town meeting. There have been many amendments and redactions to the bylaws in the past nearly four decades. Unlike parrots, zoning bylaws are not meant to be generational pets. July 2019, Dracut was amid updating its Master Plan, a report that deals with community development. A consistent theme being heard by the Master Plan Committee was the need for zoning bylaw reform. So much so the Chair of the Master Plan Committee went to the town manager, Jim Duggan at that time, and discussed starting a zoning bylaw review committee prior to the completion of the Master Plan. The Master Plan nearly complete at that time could blend seamlessly into bylaw review and not lose momentum. The cynical senior selectman insisted there was an "angle" to the request, and the project was scuttled.

Selectman Forcier was next to bring up zoning bylaw reform. This was several months after the initial denial by his colleague. Mr. Forcier's involvement on the Master Plan Committee, although he only attended the first meeting of the thirty-month commitment, was perhaps the impetus for the motion. A Zoning Bylaw Review (ZBR) Committee was formed by the Selectmen with Mr. Forcier being the Selectmen representative. Other members were recruited, two members from the zoning board of appeal, two members from the planning board. The next members are curious since members of the conservation commission and board of health already work under the purview of their own regulations, none of which are pertinent to zoning. Mr. Forcier wanted the process to be speedy with an eighteen-month goal to finalize and adopt the new zoning bylaws, this is a process that typically is accomplished in thirty to thirty-six months when organized properly. Public input would need to be discarded to keep the artificially aggressive schedule.

Mr. Forcier would end up leaving Dracut well short of his ambitions. Ms. Heather Santiago-Hutchings



would garner his vacated membership on the ZBR Committee. She is a knowledgeable candidate having served on the Zoning Board of Appeals for several years. Requests were still being made to put at least one member of the public as a member at large for the ZBR Committee. Heather assumed that charge with the selectmen. Informing the board that the member of the Board of Health was consistently absent and when asked about their commitment to the zoning review, the Board of Health stated there would be none. The members were already stressed for time with their schedules. Heather made the pitch for a member of the Master Plan Committee with much of the zoning review making reference to the newly adopted Master Plan. A majority of the Board of Selectmen were opposed to appointing a Master Plan Committee member. There were people on the Master Plan Committee that some selectmen did not want on the ZBR Committee, or any committee for that matter. A compromise was crafted to have one member at large and two alternate members at large to round out the ZBR Committee.

A call went out for applications for the three new positions and true to form in Dracut, there were fits and starts. Interviews were arranged and then cancelled. Could it be those making the arrangements and final approvals did not like who were applying? Did they, like the Grinch, need to find a way to "stop it from coming." The Town Manager at this junction stated she was contemplating dissolving the ZBR Committee and handing the task solely to the Planning Board. I should stop to let you catch your breath on this rollercoaster ride because here comes a big dip. The Town Manager threatens to dissolve a committee that she did not convene. Moreover, the ZBR Committee was established by the Board of Selectmen who have no authority over zoning bylaws. This oversight

THIBAULT: PAGE 25

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Methuen Mayor, Council Pass Huge Raises in Superior Officers Contract

Over the last four years, Methuen Mayor Neil Perry and the Methuen City Council clutched their pearls and pounded their fists calling the controversial police superior officers' contract (passed by the previous council) a "criminal contract" that was "bloated" and paid the cops "far too much of the taxpayers money."

They attacked the police chief and the previous council saying that the public was lied to when it was asserted that the contract only gave cops a 0% raise in the first year, and a 2% raise the second and third year of the three-year contract.

They went to every media outlet that would listen to rail against the previous mayor and council, claiming that they, of course, were the good guys who were going to fix the problem.

Over and over, they told us at public meetings that this previous contract had "stacking" language in it that resulted in the superior officers getting a nearly 20% raise instead of the 2% raise the previous council promised.

They called for investigations. They called police officers "criminals," and they spent millions of dollars on investigations and legal fees to push out the police chief and a police captain.

A NEW CONTRACT

Last September, Mayor Perry and his puppet councilors said they were

negotiating a "new" contract with the higher-ups in the police department. A contract that would be nothing like the "old" contract and would not be anywhere near the "obscene 20% raise" the previous council approved.

They grandstanded, they faked outrage, and they promised that the people involved in the "old" contract were "going to jail."

They looked you all in the eyes vowing that the "new" contract they were negotiating would have no hidden "stacking" language in it.

"I will not approve anything higher than a 2% raise," Councilor McCarty said, echoing his colleagues, all wrapped up in moral indignation and self-aggrandizement.

26% RAISES IN NEW CONTRACT

When it was all over, Mayor Perry and members of the city council approved a new contract and then took victory laps, patting themselves on the back and congratulating each other for putting together this "new" contract for the police superior officers.

After all, they said, this contract was "fair" and had no "stacking language" in it that would artificially inflate police salaries beyond the 2% raises they deserved.

What they didn't say, however, was that the actual contract gives each captain

RAISES IN THE METHUEN POLICE SUPERIOR OFFICERS CONTRACT

PASSED BY NEIL PERRY AND THE 2022 CITY COUNCIL

EACH CAPTAIN: \$26,260

EACH LIEUTENANT: \$26,940

EACH SERGEANT: \$21,728

on the Methuen Police Department a \$26,260 raise, each lieutenant a \$26,940 raise, and each sergeant a \$21,728 raise.

By our math, that's approximately a 26% raise for Methuen superiors.

That's even higher than the 20% raise that they called "criminal" under the previous city council and mayor.

As a side note, those raises only include salary increases.

They do not include additional benefits the mayor and council put into the "new" contract, such as longevity, uniform allowances, sick time buybacks, the Quinn Bill, or health insurance.

This begs the question, isn't this

"new" police superior officers contract "criminal" by their own definition?

It also highlights the fact that former Police Chief Joe Solomon is not in jail after nearly a dozen investigations, and millions of Methuen tax dollars spent to try and put him there - only to have the mayor and current city council do exactly what they accused Solomon of orchestrating in the "old" police contract.

Whatever you may think of Joe Solomon or the "old" police contract, you have to admit, the "new" police contract certainly raises some interesting questions about what we've been told about the "old" contract. ♦

Toxic Propaganda Corrupts America's Youth

Ken Willette

VALLEY PATRIOT GUEST COLUMNIST

Woe is today's student living in our vibrant republic yet dominated by teachers and professors espousing outlandish and spurious historical analogies. For these instructors of impressionable youth are doing a grave disservice to their comprehension of American history and global events.

They are deliberately pivoting their students to the following highly suspect declarations: "America's democracy is dying; America is destined to become the next Nazi Germany; Israel is an evil apartheid state; and Cuba's Revolution must be admired and replicated."

Their teaching methods embrace the flawed principles of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions Movement (BDS); the questionable tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT); and an unhealthy worship of the Cuban Revolution and the legacy of Che Guevara.

Ironically, considering the supposedly enlightened backgrounds of many educators, these movements and theories follow racist, homophobic, and anti-Semitic ideals.

For example, in the twisted world of the Far Left, it is perfectly reasonable for UMASS-Amherst to host a BDS event for an organization with the stated goal of 'eradicating the nation-state of Israel.' A blatantly discriminatory movement that has been directly identified as anti-Semitic by the New England Anti-Defamation League, this group will be routinely welcomed with open arms by many misguided scholars and academics. Where is the campus support for a democratic

and multicultural nation like Israel?

How is it possible for an alleged apartheid state such as Israel to allow for Arabs to serve in the Knesset (Israel's national parliament), for Muslims to join the Israeli Defense Force and for a Palestinian Arab to serve on Israel's Supreme Court? Because, drum roll please, Israel has never been an apartheid state. Meanwhile, Palestinian students are indoctrinated to seek the destruction of Israel and the death of Jews. Palestinian leaders still financially support suicide bombers and welcome outside funds for deadly terrorists, despite an unemployment rate hovering near 50% and a massive influx of foreign aid.

How can some of the same educators who support the BDS movement also proclaim that America is on the fast track to Nazi Germany? This is a very strange statement to make given that the current Senate Majority Leader, Charles Schumer, is Jewish. And the last time I checked, our nation elected an African American POTUS twice, and almost elected the first Jewish Vice President back in 2000. Former President Trump had the strongest Pro-Israel record of any POTUS, and he proudly had Jewish family members serving in key administration positions.

How many neo-Nazis have been elected to Congress, State Houses, or major city councils? I can't pinpoint any historical examples at all, but I know KKK members who rose as high-ranking Democratic members of Congress. The most prominent example being former Senator Robert Byrd, who later apologized for his past membership. But now we have the first African American Minority Leader in Congress. Times have

changed for the better, especially given the formerly strong nexus between the KKK and Southern Democratic leaders at all levels of government since the days of Reconstruction.

Jews were desperately attempting to escape Nazi Germany due to unbearable discrimination, economic boycotts, and confiscation laws. But if our nation has emerged as such an inhospitable environment to raise a family, why have millions of illegals risked everything in successfully evading our border security?

If we are gravitating toward an insufferable dictatorship, wouldn't people of color be reversing the migration trend of the last 30 years?

Many radicalized educators also dismiss the ultimate sacrifice of over 300,000 white males who died fighting for the Union and freeing over 4 million slaves, because CRT classifies all white males as supportive of white supremacy. 40,000 African Americans died honorably also. CRT discounts white Civil Rights Era advocates and Civil War abolitionists, some of whom were killed for their beliefs.

College students and professors alike have also engaged in strange adoration of Che Guevara, the right-hand man behind Fidel Castro's Cuban Revolution. They have worn his image on t-shirts during protests over the years, yet they completely gloss over his virulent homophobic actions, including placing gay men in labor camps for sinister reeducation purposes. Despite his training as a doctor, Che relished opportunities to torture and murder political opponents.

The contradictions are mind-boggling. Leftists bemoan that our

nation is allegedly goosestepping toward authoritarianism, but they didn't hesitate to wear masks at night and arrive at the home of Fox commentator Tucker Carlson, while his wife and children were about to retire to bed. Meanwhile, their father was on the air invoking his first amendment rights and reaching out to millions of viewers. Yet conservatives are somehow destroying the Constitution and apparently ordering black boots. Seriously? But are the tactics of Antifa really any different than the 1930s Brownshirts in stamping out political opposition? Political violence, hooliganism and mob rule justify their actions to attack contrarian beliefs. Why would conservative Jew Ben Shapiro require extensive security and police details to give speeches at college campuses?

I am an avid reader of history and have devoured books with both liberal and conservative perspectives, because I want to broaden my never-ceasing drive to learn. I have studied sunset communities where blacks were not welcomed after dark, the inhumane cruelty of slavery, the aftermath of the Tulsa race riots, the horrors of the Holocaust and the doomed Weimar Republic. To equate 2023 America to 1860 America, or 1938 Germany to our current diversified and multi-religious society, only supplants serious historical scholarship with deleterious propaganda that would impress Goebbels. Stop giving factually baseless classroom instructions and using inflammatory propaganda as a weapon to deceive students to your warped political thought. ♦



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Raymond Brunelle

A Life of Service and Inspiration

KANE

VALLEY PATRIOT MASCOT/COLUMNIST

Kane had the honor of accompanying Raymond Brunelle to Arlington National Cemetery to visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as well as visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Kane found the experience to be very humbling.

Kane learned that Raymond Brunelle is no stranger to serving his country and local citizens of the Merrimack Valley. Raymond, known and loved by many as Hunter from his 25-year membership in the Nam Knights Motorcycle Club, was born in the year 1947 and graduated from Lowell High School. Kane knows Hunter as an expert in making the best French fries which he personally samples on the down low.

Hunter volunteered to join the Navy

KANE'S KORNER

at the age of 20. Raymond was inspired by his grandfather, a World War I hero, who followed the footsteps of his great grandfather who also served. Volunteering to go to Vietnam was met with both pride and fear from his parents especially since Hunter was an only child. Raymond was assigned to a Navy post in Rhode Island; where he was often called an "old man" since his fellow sailors were 18 years old. Some sailors were volunteers, and many were drafted.

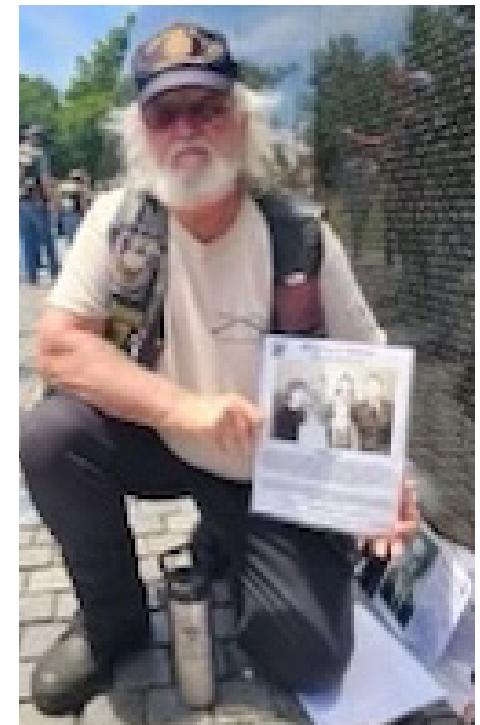
During Vietnam, Raymond was assigned to the Ship Mariposa along with 260 other sailors. The Mariposa carried artillery, ammunition, and bombs to the ports under the cover of darkness. These missions were always under threat of the

Vietcong. In fact, due to the explosive nature of the weapons, the sailors were told there would be no way to move far enough away from the ship if it was hit, so their only option of survival would be to put a fire out on the ship. Kane reflected on the bravery of Raymond and his fellow sailors.

Hunter explained that the ship had two diesel engines that were two stories high, allowing the vessel to sail halfway around the world at 17 miles an hour. Kane thought wow that is pretty slow. He asked Hunter how long his sail back to the United States was? Raymond said it took two months with holes in the ship leaking water the entire trip back. Raymond explained when the vessel returned to port it was immediately taken out of service for being too dangerous to sail.

Although Hunter remains very proud of his service, the loss was very great. Kane observed Hunter take a piece of paper out of his vest listing the 11 people from the Greater Lowell area with their names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Hunter carries this information with him. One person very close to his heart is his childhood best friend Walter Lemieux who served in the Army during Vietnam. Specialist Fourth Class Lemieux served as a medic and was killed in battle. Hunter has stayed in contact with his family over the years and visits his Memorial in Lowell frequently.

In the above Vietnam Wall photo, you will see a picture of Hunter holding a picture of Colonel Sheldon John Burnett. Hunter explained to Kane that Sherman was considered Missing in Action for



years until his remains were identified in 2005. Colonel Burnett was finally put to rest when his remains were identified, providing some closure to his family.

For the last 40 plus years Hunter has continued his service to the Veteran community through acts of kindness such as driving veterans to their healthcare appointments, and more formal events through the Nam Knights Motorcycle Club such as regular food drives, lunches at the local veteran homeless shelters, and fundraisers to benefit veteran outreach organizations. For decades Hunter has been a key member in organizing volunteers to help with the Paralyzed Veterans Association of America Fishing Derby.

Kane hopes when he is a senior dog, he will live his life with as much energy as Hunter. Thank you Raymond Brunelle for your service and dedication to your community. You are an inspiration to all.

Kane Peaslee, Columnist
Valley Patriot ◊

WEATHER: FROM 8

got into the low 90s. During May ocean temperatures were generally in the 50s. The ocean warms slower in the spring and cools slower in the fall than areas over land (inland areas). After May 28th a cold front brought cooler air to end the month along with dry conditions. Now that we are in June the nights should be free of any frost or freezing temperatures. It is safe to plant flowers outside and plant the vegetables in the garden. Also, during June, the ocean temperature will continue to get warmer. The ocean temperatures are warmest in August and September. On June 1st hurricane season began in the northern hemisphere. Hurricane season continues through November 30th. On December 1st hurricane season is over for the northern hemisphere.

We are now getting closer to the start of summer and as a result thunderstorms

will start to increase as the air becomes hot and humid. If you are outside at the beach or on a baseball field, or tennis court and you hear thunder, get indoors in a sturdy building and away from any windows. If you hear thunder that means the lightning is close enough that you can be struck. Also, if outdoors, get away from trees because lightning can hit the top of the tree and travel down the tree to the ground where you can get struck.

Will we see a lot of hot humid weather in June?

Any heat waves - days when the temperature reaches 90 degrees or higher for 3 consecutive days or more?

A lot of rain in June?

Hurricanes? Stay tuned to next month's article for these answers. In the meantime, enjoy the longer days with daylight and be safe. ◊

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Hector Baez of Lawrence Gets 22-26 Years for the Murder of Delvis Paulino-Fernandez in 2020

A Lawrence man pleaded guilty to manslaughter last month for a 2020 shooting on Newton St. that left one man dead and two others wounded, Essex County District Attorney Paul F. Tucker announced.

Hector Baez, 25, was sentenced to 22-to-26 years in prison, 18-to-20 years on the manslaughter charge followed by another four-to-six years on a series of assault and battery and carrying a firearm without a license charges.

The plea was accepted by Judge Janice Howe in Lawrence Superior Court just as Baez was slated to face a jury trial on a first-degree murder charge.

Baez was charged with killing Delvis

Paulino-Fernandez, 26, of Lawrence by shooting him on Newton Street in Lawrence on May 3, 2020. The two others shot while the group was attending an outdoor gathering were treated and released at Lawrence General Hospital.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Alexander Grimes, A.J. Camelio, and Emily Mello, with assistance from Sgt. Matthew Wilson of the Massachusetts State Police and Detective William Colantuoni from the Lawrence Police Department.

Baez was represented by attorneys Christopher Federico and John McLaughlin, both of Danvers. ◇



LARE Institute of American Training is Holding Annual Graduation

The LARE Institute of American Training is holding our annual Graduation Celebration on Thursday, June 22nd. The procession begins at 6PM at their 6 Campanelli Drive, Andover location.

The LARE Institute is a school, based out of Andover, that has served the Merrimack Valley and surrounding areas for more than 40 years. This year, the graduating class will proudly cross our stage while being cheered on by their families, friends, and teachers.

Students have earned certificates in a variety of our LARE Institute programs spanning from; ESL, HiSET, Electronics Assembly, Business Technology, Certified Nursing Assistant, and Medical Assisting. But what makes the LARE Institute so unique & different is our signature WOW! Magic culture. Our teachers approach each and every day with the same passion for excitement and FUN that guarantees that no day is boring. In fact, the result of such attention to detail is that each person we serve has a greater opportunity to fall in love with learning that sets them on the path to creating more meaningful lives.

“Our WOW! Magic leads us to put in that extra effort, to go the extra mile and to put those we serve first. It reminds us each and every day to bring out the best in every person with whom we are working. And by doing so, we show each student just how much Every Life Matters.”

“Our annual LARE Institute graduation celebration is an opportunity to recognize our students for their academic accomplishments. Our students work hard to complete their programs of study and we want to ensure that they are recognized, acknowledged and celebrated for this. What makes our students so exceptional are their individual stories of overcoming some of life’s most overwhelming challenges.”

“Some are just kids graduating from high school who are looking for opportunity in an affordable next step, some have been working and are suddenly faced with having to change careers unexpectedly and learn something completely new, and some have never finished high school and are looking to earn their HiSET to start them on the path to a brighter future.”

“We are so PROUD of the LARE Institutes Graduating Class of 2023! Keep spreading your WOW! Magic!”

American Training Inc. is a non-profit organization based in the Merrimack Valley that provides housing, education, training & support services to people with disabilities, youth at risk & adult learners who are looking for a pathway towards a more meaningful life.

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PAYANO: FROM PAGE 5

includes significant investments in elder nutrition programs, social emotional learning grants for K-12 schools, and support for children advocacy centers.

Recognizing the importance of affordable housing, the Senate’s FY24 budget includes a historic investment of \$1.05 billion dedicated to housing stability, residential assistance, and homelessness assistance. These funds will provide critical relief to families and individuals grappling with the effects of the pandemic and financial insecurity. Notable investments include increased funding for emergency assistance family shelters, the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, and support for homeless individuals.

The Senate’s budget sets the stage for a conference committee to reconcile the differences between the versions passed by the Senate and House of Representatives. As the budget process moves forward, we will remain committed to upholding fiscal responsibility, ensuring equity and inclusivity, and positioning Massachusetts as a competitive and affordable state for all.

In conclusion, the Senate’s FY24 budget reflects a comprehensive strategy to address the challenges faced by the Commonwealth. Through strategic investments in education, housing, and economic recovery, Massachusetts aims to build a prosperous future for its residents. ◇

Feds Indict Haverhill, Methuen and Lawrence Men for Drug Dealing

WHAV.NET

Men from Haverhill, Methuen, and Lawrence face fentanyl and cocaine-related drug charges in federal court after being indicted by a grand jury in Boston.

Twenty-year-old Gustavo Adolfo Reyes Gonzalez of Haverhill, 27-year-old Daniel Lopez-Gonzalez of Methuen, and 30-year-old Erickson Castro Perez of Lawrence were each indicted on conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute drugs. Castro Perez was also indicted on distribution of and possession with intent to distribute para-fluorofentanyl, distribution of and possession with intent to distribute fentanyl and cocaine and distribution of and possession with intent to distribute fentanyl last summer in Haverhill.

Reyes Gonzalez was arrested last Thursday and released on conditions following an initial appearance in federal court in Worcester that day. Lopez-Gonzalez was arrested on state charges Jan. 23 and remains in jail. Castro Perez is also in state custody on an unrelated matter. Lopez-Gonzalez and Castro Perez will appear in federal court in Worcester at a later date.

According to court documents, between last June and this past January, prosecutors allege the trio conspired to distribute drugs. Lopez-Gonzalez is allegedly responsible for distributing 400 grams or more of fentanyl and 100 grams or more of substances that are chemically analogous to fentanyl known as acetyl fentanyl and para-fluorofentanyl. ◇

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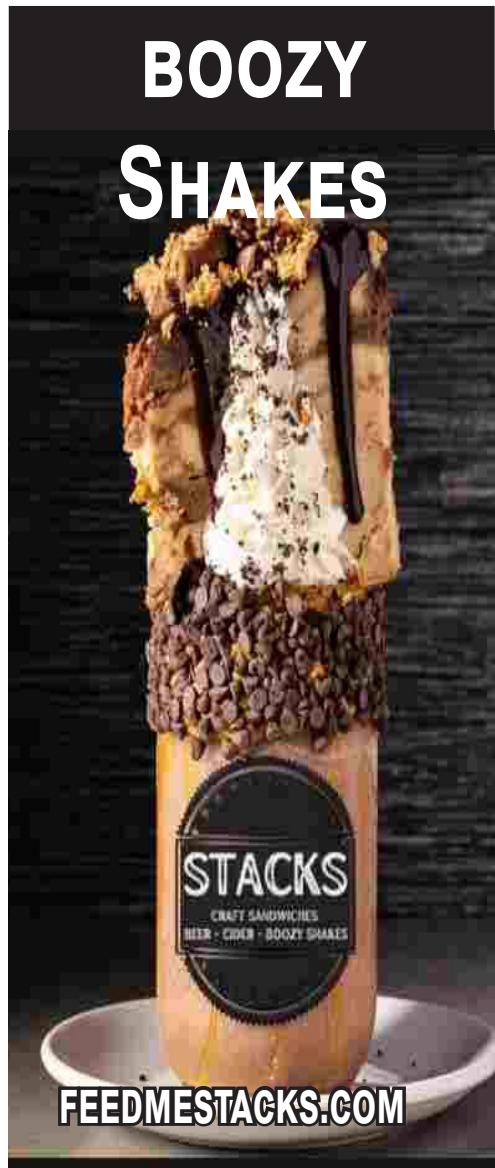
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Congratulations to Miguel & Aracelis Cirineo on their grand opening of Mamasita's Mexican Restaurant last month! Lawrence Mayor Briann DePeña told The Valley Patriot he was very excited to see a new addition to the culinary scene in the city. Pictured above are Lawrence City Councilor Anna Levy, Aracelis and Miguel Cirineo, Mayor DePena, Lawrence DPW Director Jorge Jaime, and Lawrence City Councilor Greg Delrosario.

The Psychological Center, Thanks Sponsors, Participants in Kentucky Derby Fundraiser

LAWRENCE — Chief Executive Officer Carina Pappalardo and The Psychological Center, Inc. thank the sponsors, donors, and participants in a Kentucky Derby-themed fundraiser that raised approximately \$43,000 for TPC's programs.

Held on Saturday, May 6 at the Haverhill Country Club, the Kentucky Derby fundraiser was attended by about 150 guests, who participated in a best hat contest, raffles, live auctions, and a "Down and Derby" musical chairs horse race where Jason Azzi, with Solarbyjazzi was the winner, among other entertainment and activities.

"It is nice when people think of you and make an effort to show they care, not walk away. We are immensely pleased at the turnout for our annual Kentucky Derby fundraiser, which ensured that our guests at Pegasus House, Women's View, and Daybreak Shelter were the real winners of the day — our champions," said CEO Pappalardo."



"On June 12, 1948, President Harry Truman signed into law the Women's Armed Services Integration Act. The law enabled women to serve as permanent, regular members of the armed forces in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and the-then recently formed Air Force."





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The Methuen Rotary Club held their 13th Annual Rotary Club of Methuen Celebration of Achievement last month. This event allows the club to recognize the accomplishments of outstanding teachers and students, award college scholarships and present their "Service Above Self" Award, honoring an outstanding individual who has made a significant contribution in the community. Pictured above are the students who won scholarships with State Representative Ryan Hamilton (Right) Receiving awards were: 2023 Teacher of the Year Award, Amy Currie. 2023 Student of the Year Award, Tanvi Patel, 2023 Scholarship Awards: Brooke Tardugno, Nathaniel Hashem, Caitlyn McGhee, Hailey D'Hondt, and Peyton Florence. 2023 Robert A. Bucker Memorial Scholarship: Jason Labelle. 2023 Service Above Self Award Winner: Martha Tatro.



Methuen Police Charge Woman Who Drove Into House As Repeat Offender Operating Under the Influence of Drugs

METHUEN — Police Chief Scott McNamara has reported that the Methuen Police Department is summoning a woman to court for operating under the influence of drugs when she struck a home on Broadway Street on Wednesday afternoon.

Oddly, Methuen Police would not disclose the name of the woman.

On Wednesday, April 12th, at approximately 1:35PM, Methuen Police received a 911 call reporting a vehicle had struck a building at 91 Broadway.

Officers arrived to find a Volvo station wagon that struck a building and caused its front porch to collapse. Two bicycles

that were parked next to the building were also destroyed.

The driver of the vehicle, a 31-year-old Kingston, New Hampshire woman, was taken to a local hospital for evaluation.

An on-scene investigation determined the driver was allegedly huffing and blacked out prior to the crash occurring.

That woman will appear in court at a later date to face charges of operating under the influence of drugs (second offense), marked lanes violation, and speeding. ♦

Wood To Seek Mayor's Seat, LePage Runs for Council; Basiliere Enters Ward 1 Race

Tim Coco
WHAV.NET

A 2021 Haverhill mayoral contender and former Haverhill City Council Vice President Colin F. LePage said Thursday he has decided to seek re-election to the City Council as an at-large candidate.

LePage now joins a five-way race for one of four at-large City Council seats, joining Council President Timothy J. Jordan; City Council Vice President John A. Michitson, who took out nomination papers this week; former Council candidate Fred A. Simmons; and Councilor Thomas J. Sullivan. Although the office he seeks has changed, LePage said his goals remain the same.

"As a past city councilor and former mayoral candidate, I worked to 'achieve more with less' within the budget for the betterment of Haverhill," he said in a statement.

As early as 2015, LePage developed a reputation among his colleagues for finding money in unused or obscure city accounts. He first found \$200,000 in unused city accounts that went on to help reduce the size of property tax increases. He then discovered \$120,000 somehow abandoned in a parking lighting account and won agreement to place the money in a rainy-day account in hopes of convincing the Haverhill School Committee to hire additional health teachers to help combat the opiate drug epidemic.

He said his priorities have remained the same over the years. These include continuing to focus on education, public safety and public works improvements by identifying money in the city budget to ensure these goals are met; increasing public awareness of government operations and budget allocations through clear, transparent communications; continuing advocacy for youth, senior citizens, minorities and small businesses for a better Haverhill to live and work in.

"If elected again, I would be honored and humbled to continue this work and advocate for these principles," he said.

Conservation Commission Vice Chair Ralph T. Basiliere takes out nomination papers at the Haverhill City Clerk's office. (Courtesy photograph.)

Competition for one of the newly created Ward councilor positions also heated up Thursday when Conservation Commission Vice Chair Ralph T.



Basiliere pulled nomination papers in Ward 1.

"I'm running for Ward 1 city councilor because I care about the community. I've lived in my whole life. I'll fight for funding to pave roads, improve parks, protect drinking water, get our children reading at grade level and keep our neighborhood safe," Basiliere said in a statement.

Veras took out nomination papers on the first day the forms became available May 1st.

Mayor

Barrett, Melinda E.
Campanile, Debra
Eleftheriou, George
Wood, Scott W. Jr.

City Council-At Large

Jordan, Timothy J.
LePage, Colin F.
Michitson, John A.
Simmons, Fred
Sullivan, Thomas J.

City Council Ward 1

Basiliere, Ralph T.
Veras, Alexander

City Council Ward 2

Garcia-King, Carmen
Hobbs Everett, Katrina

City Council Ward 3

Ferreira, Devan
City Council Ward 4
Lewandowski, Melissa J.
Quimby, Kenneth E.

City Council Ward 5

Morales, Michael
Toohey, Shaun P.

City Council Ward 6

Aguilo, Oliver
McGonagle, Michael S.

City Council Ward 7

Rogers, Catherine P.

School Committee-At Large*

Magliocchetti, Paul A.
Rosa, Richard J.
Ryan-Ciardiello, Maura L. ♦

Ramon Joseph Cruz Jr. of Methuen Pleads Guilty to Stealing \$452,000 in Federal Aid

Bought Cell Phones to Hide Source

A 27-year-old Methuen man pleaded guilty last Thursday in federal court in Boston to using stolen identities to fraudulently obtain more than \$452,000 in Economic Injury Disaster Loan funds from the Small Business Administration and to disguise the source of the money.

Ramon Joseph Cruz Jr. pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and four counts of wire fraud and aiding and abetting. U.S. District Court Judge Richard G. Stearns scheduled sentencing for Aug. 20. Cruz was arrested and charged in December 2020 along with alleged co-accused Darwyn Joseph. They were subsequently indicted by a federal grand jury in January 2021.

According to court documents, the men were involved in a conspiracy to use stolen identity information of U.S. citizens to apply for U.S. Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loans. Specifically, Cruz and, allegedly, Joseph used stolen identities to open fraudulent bank accounts which were then linked to other fraudulent bank accounts set up to receive the federal aid. Cruz and, allegedly, Joseph also received some of the debit cards associated with fraudulent bank accounts where the money was deposited, and then laundered the funds by spending \$250,000 on iPhones in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

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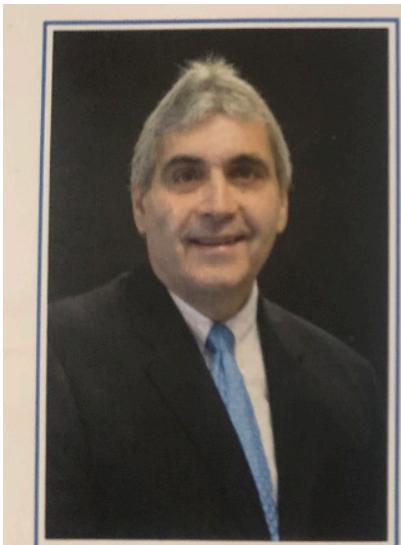
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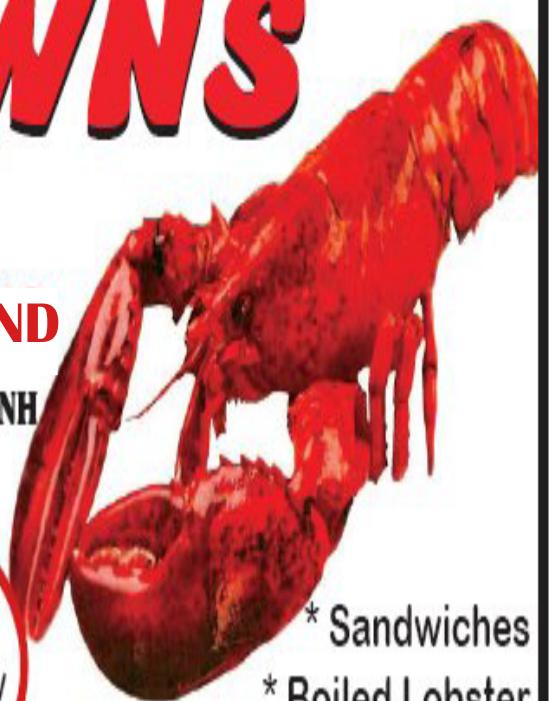
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Heather Santiago-Hutchings Zoned Out in Dracut

By Brian Genest
VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

What was Selectman Heather Santiago-Hutchings thinking? For a year, she's been a member of the Zoning Bylaw Review committee, which is in the process of trying to overhaul the town's zoning bylaws for the first time since the 1980s. She's been present, at least physically, but you have to wonder where her mind has been when it comes to informing the community about the proposed changes, which are wide ranging and significant.

Those zoning bylaw changes were supposed to come before town meeting for consideration in June, but the Board of Selectmen and residents were so blindsided and concerned by the number, scope and potential impact of the proposed changes and lack of communication about them, they have been pushed forward to a future town meeting.

Heather Santiago-Hutchings had just one task to perform as the selectmen's representative on that committee: report to the board and townspeople about the zoning changes. She failed.

Not once in the last year did Heather Santiago-Hutchings let her colleagues, or the taxpayers know what was going on. Not once did she mention a single item of substance about the changes when asked for subcommittee reports at selectmen's meetings month after month. Not once did she give the heads-up that the changes included removing the need for special permits in some cases, changing some zones, and changing the permitted uses in some zones. Talk about zoning out!

When the Board of Selectmen began

EYE ON DRACUT

reviewing and discussing the proposed changes at their meeting in May, it was like Heather Santiago-Hutchings had never heard about any of them. At one point in the discussion, Town Manager Ann Vandal asked her for clarification, "Heather, are you on the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee?" She was, and she should have known at least something about them.

But Heather-Santiago Hutchings hasn't been focused on policy, she's been focused on politics. If you remember, she spent a considerable amount of time and effort in recent months trying to change the makeup of the committee and get one of her buddies appointed. She failed on that mission, too, while wasting plenty of the board's valuable time. Selectmen talked about the issue at five meetings in the fall last year. Everyone's time would have been better spent if Heather-Santiago Hutchings had let them know what the bylaw changes entailed instead.

In case you missed it, last September, Heather Santiago-Hutchings brought forward a proposal to remove the Board of Health member from the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee and replace them with a member of the now-defunct Master Planning Committee. At that time, Community Development Director Alison Manugian told selectmen that Health Inspector Dave Ouellette had talked to the three members of the Board of Health and they were unable to serve on the committee.

The board delayed the proposal so they could check with the long-serving Board of Health members about their availability and interest.

"These members have been serving the town for many, many, many years," Selectman Joe DiRocco said. "If for some reason they can't do it, you know, we appoint, so I don't know why we wouldn't have them come in and tell us they can't do it for whatever reason. I don't like to hear it from someone else that they can't. I would rather hear it from them, seeing we appoint them."

DiRocco also suggested that an at-large member would be more appropriate than a member of a dissolved committee.

"Is there someone on the Master Planning Committee that you don't want? Is that what's happening here?" Heather Santiago-Hutchings asked.

"It sounds like there's somebody on it that you want," DiRocco answered. He answered correctly. Spoiler alert: That somebody was Dracut's most-rejected perennial candidate Phil Thibault, her pal who has lost nine town elections.

"It seems like there's people on the Master Planning Committee you don't want in this spot," Heather Santiago-Hutchings repeated again later in the discussion. "Alison's already confirmed she's reached out to the three people, so it's almost like you think I'm lying, or Alison is lying."

"That's not what I'm saying," DiRocco responded. "We appoint them. I think we



have the right to talk with them. I don't like someone else making a decision for me."

When selectmen picked up the discussion at their next meeting later that month, however, DiRocco did question whether board members had been told the truth.

"I have to say, the information we were given was not accurate. Members (of the Board of Health) told me they were never asked," DiRocco said. "We were told that they were. That was not accurate."

Town Manager Ann Vandal said she met with the three members of the Board of Health, and one had committed to serving on the committee.

As a result of the board's discussion, Heather Santiago-Hutchings changed her proposal twice before the vote was taken. First, she wanted to keep the voting membership the same and add two non-voting alternate members to the

GENEST: PAGE 21

IN YOUR CORNER with AUDITOR DIZOGGLIO

Celebrating Our Amazing Graduates of the Class of 2023

Hello Valley Patriot Readers,
Recently, I had the honor of delivering the commencement address to the Class of 2023 at my alma mater, Middlesex Community College. It was a beautiful day celebrating all of the hard work, tireless efforts and sacrifices made by the graduates, their families, and friends.

As a proud Middlesex graduate myself, it is important to me to work toward ensuring that all families - no matter where we come from, what we look like, or what our bank balance is - have access and opportunities to succeed. I am grateful to have the opportunity I have now, as State Auditor, to continue to focus on carrying out that mission to help shine a light on areas of our state government systems that might not be as equitable or transparent as they should be to everyday people.

After I graduated from Middlesex, I didn't know my experience would help lead me to the path of being the state's top government watchdog.

Looking back on my experience, it wasn't an easy ride from high school to Middlesex - in fact, I wasn't very focused on my academics at all. I was just trying to get by and stay on the right path. Eventually, my path led me to take courses at Middlesex, while simultaneously waitressing and cleaning people's houses to pay the bills. Once

on the right path, I recognized the importance of surrounding myself with positive influences to keep myself strong, focused, and disciplined.

I knew it was my responsibility to fight like hell for other working families in our communities who have also been dismissed, ignored, or disenfranchised by a system in our government that's still not working for all families the way that it could and the way that it should.

I fought for what I believed was right, worked hard, ignored the haters, and eventually became the youngest woman serving in the Senate. Now, I'm your State Auditor - currently the youngest statewide constitutional officer.

My message to every graduate is that your degree or certificate is not a gift - you worked hard to earn it. You've battled your own personal challenges, jumped over hurdles no one else knows about, and fought to get across the finish line. Some graduates are surrounded by love and encouragement, while others may have felt alone in their endeavor. Regardless of where you are along this journey - I'm cheering for you. Your neighbors are cheering for you. Our community is cheering for you.

My message to graduates this season is to persevere. I have five principles that I hope encourage you on your journey:

1. Fail or Fall Forward - this is a

lesson I originally learned from the great leadership guru John Maxwell. Do what you know in your heart you're being called to do - without being attached to the outcome. Let go of the fear of losing or the fear of falling on your face. And when you do fall, just make sure you're falling forward - by getting up and looking to your next opportunity.

2. Forgive - People ask me all the time how I wake up and go to work at the place that fired me with powerful politicians who still want to get rid of me. My honest response is forgiveness - daily. Be sure to set boundaries because you are no one's doormat and deserve respect.

3. Feed your body, mind, and soul with good - Healthy food increases our physical abilities while junk food decreases them. So, check your social interactions and the content you're allowing yourself to absorb to make sure it's bringing your spirit up and not down.

4. Be a survivor - don't stay a victim - None of us can control our circumstances enough to completely avoid hurt, loss, and heartbreak. But we all get to decide how we respond.

5. Choose your words wisely - because we are who we say we are.

Graduates, I believe - with all my heart - in you. You are strong. You've got grit. You're intelligent, determined, and



resilient.

Congratulations to all the graduates of the Class of 2023 - you did it!

As always, feel free to contact me anytime via email at auditor@sao.state.ma.us or by phone at (617) 727-2075. If you're ever in the State House, I hope you'll stop by and visit our team in room 230!

Yours in service,
Diana ♦

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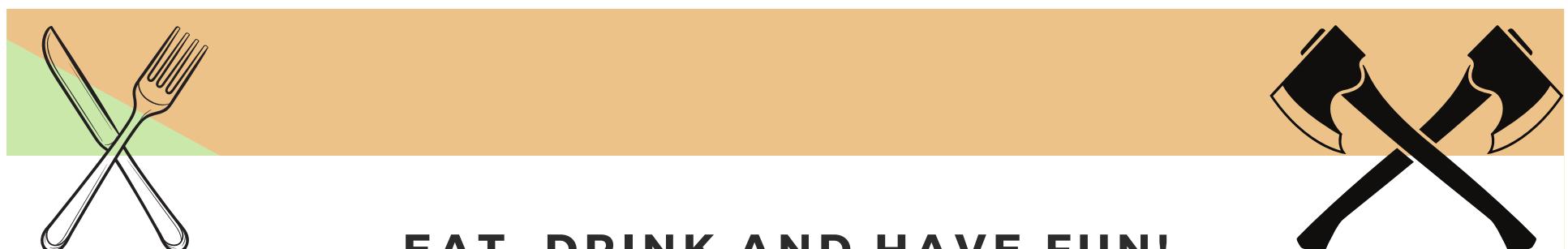
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WHAT IS YOUR TOWN PAYING
CITY EMPLOYEES?

According to govsalaries.com this is how much each city listed paid their city employees in 2021 (the most recent numbers available) compared to the national average.

Items of note, the average city employee salary in Methuen is the highest in the region at \$76,864. This is 64% higher than national average.

North Andover had the lowest average employee salary at \$40,530.

The City of Lawrence has the highest number of city employees with 3,647, workers on the payroll.

Here are the raw numbers.

CITY OF HAVERHILL

Highest salary in 2021 was \$399,611.

Number of employees in 2021 was 593

Average annual salary was \$64,826

Average salary is 38% higher than the US average

Median salary is 44% higher than the US median salary.

CITY OF METHUEN

Highest Salary in 2021 \$263,600

Number of employees 454

Average Annual Salary \$76,864

Median Salary \$83,662

Average Salary is 64% higher than national average

Median salary is 92% higher than the national average

CITY OF LAWRENCE

Highest Salary \$269,117

Number of employees 3,647

Average annual salary \$53,626

Median Salary \$53,527

Average salary is 14% higher than national average

Median salary is 23% higher.

TOWN OF ANDOVER

Highest salary \$230,900

Number of employees 2,097

Average annual salary \$45,752

Median salary \$35,909

Average Salary is 2% higher than national average

Median salary is 17% higher than national average

TOWN OF NORTH ANDOVER

Highest salary \$212,683

Number of employees 1,752

Average annual salary \$40,530

Median salary \$26,725

Average Salary is 14% higher than the national average

Median salary is 39% higher than national average

STATE EMPLOYEES

Number of employees: 186,464

Average State salary \$55,816

Median Salary \$50,592

TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

Lawrence Mayor Brian DePena behind the wheel of a jet at the Lawrence airport during his tour and



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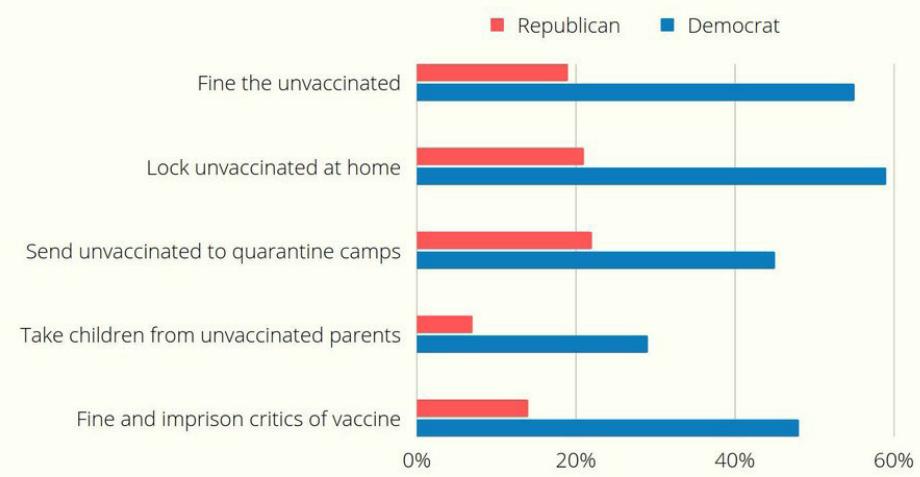
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Democrats in January 2022



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https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/partner_surveys/jan_2022/covid_19_democratic_voters_support_harsh_measures_against_unvaccinated

GENEST: FROM 18

Zoning Bylaw Review Committee from the Master Planning Committee, which Vandal reminded her had been officially disbanded. Once the board majority indicated they weren't in favor of that idea and instead suggested making the alternates at-large members, she revised it, again.

In December, Heather Santiago-Hutchings put an item on the board's agenda to change the makeup of the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee, again. Her story was the same, again: no members of the Board of Health were able to participate. This time, she made the motion to remove the Board of Health member and add an at-large member, which passed 4 to 1 with DiRocco opposed.

The next item on the agenda that evening, of course, was Phil Thibault requesting appointment to the at-large seat on the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee, which had been created a moment earlier. Thibault was rejected for the position, however, with the board majority citing conflict of interest, as Thibault is an architect who conducts business in town

with contractors and others governed by the zoning bylaws.

It was Thibault's own words that torpedoed him. In 2016, Thibault resigned from the Planning Board after talking with the state's Ethics Commissions and then he went on Warren Shaw's AM radio program to talk about it. Shaw's sidekick Shawn Ashe posted the audio recording on his Dracut Forum blog, so you can hear all the details for yourself. (<https://www.dracutforum.com/index.php/2016/08/28/phil-thibault-resigns-from-planning-board/>)

It's a shame Heather Santiago-Hutchings didn't spend her time focused on the right thing. The Board of Selectmen deserved better from their colleague. The taxpayers deserved better from their elected official. Heather-Santiago Hutchings didn't just drop the ball when it comes to the zoning bylaw changes, she wasn't even on the playing field.

-- Brian Genest is the producer and host of *Eye On Dracut*, winner of the Hometown Media Award for News, sponsored by Lucky Oil. ♦

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
TRIAL COURT
SUPERIOR COURT DEPARTMENT

ESSEX, ss Case No. 2377CV00379
JANE A. HOLDEN, TRAVIS SCOTT, and HILLARY GOODHUE
v.
HEIRS, DEVISEES AND LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES OF OTIS K. PEABODY, et al.

ORDER OF NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

TO: The Heirs, Devisees and Legal Representatives of: Otis K. Peabody, Alice Jane Peabody, Lillian P. Paine, Willard J. Packer, Clara A. Packer, Clayton D. Farrar, and Mary A. Farrar

You are hereby notified that a civil action has been filed by the above-named plaintiffs in which you are named as a defendant, wherein they are seeking alternative service of process by publication. This complaint concerns the property known and numbered as 360 Main Street, Groveland, Massachusetts and the vacant lot located across the street from 360 Main Street ("Vacant Lot") (collectively, the "Property"). Said vacant lot is described in the deed recorded with the Essex County (South) Registry of Deeds in Book 41406, Page 461, and shown as Lot 16-20A on the Groveland Assessor's Map.

Plaintiff seeks a declaratory judgment concerning title to the Vacant Lot. Specifically, Plaintiffs seek a declaration that Jane Holden acquired title to the Vacant Lot by adverse possession and that she held 100% ownership interest in the entirety of the Property inclusive of the Vacant Lot at the time of her January 18, 2023 conveyance of the Vacant Lot to Scott and Goodhue, and that Travis Scott and Hillary Goodhue currently hold marketable title of record to the Property, inclusive of the Vacant Lot, free and clear of any claims of the defendants, their predecessors, ancestors, heirs and devisees

This complaint may be examined at the Essex County Superior Court, or a copy obtained from plaintiff's attorney.

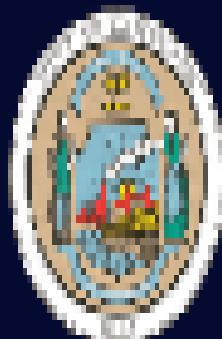
If you intend to make any defense, you are hereby required to serve upon the plaintiff's attorney, Kaleena Machado, Esq., Dalton & Finegold, LLP, whose address is 34 Essex Street, Andover, MA 01810 an answer to the complaint on or before the 28th day of June, 2023, next, the return day, hereof, and a copy thereof must be filed in this court on or before said day.

If you fail to do so, judgment by default will be taken against you for relief demanded in the complaint. Unless otherwise provided by Rule 13(a), your answer must state as a counterclaim any claim which you may have against the plaintiff which arise out of the transaction or occurrence that is the subject matter of the plaintiffs' claim, or you will thereafter be barred from making such claim in any other action.

It appearing to this Court that no personal service of the Complaint has been made on the defendants identified herein above that after diligent search Plaintiffs can find no such persons upon whom they can lawfully make service, it is ORDERED that notice of this suit be given to them by publishing a copy of this notice once in The Valley Patriot, a newspaper general circulation in Groveland in the County of Essex and said Commonwealth at least 20 days before the above responsive pleading due date.

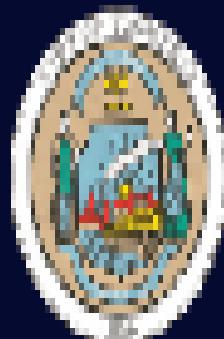
Dated at Salem, Massachusetts, this 4th day of May, 2023.

Dunigan, E., Justice



Mayor
Brian A. DePeña

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Lawrence, MA 01843



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City Manager of Lawrence
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AWILDA PIMENTEL
Community Development Director

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of Massachusetts



HERO: FROM PAGE 1

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In addition to the one Medal of Honor, troopers of the 517th PRCT earned, Six Distinguished Service Crosses, 131 Silver Stars, 631 Bronze Stars, 1,576 Purple Hearts, five Legion of Merits, four Soldiers Medals, (awarded for lifesaving at great personal risk) two Air Medals and seventeen soldiers were awarded the French Croix de Guerre. For their team's service during the Battle of the Bulge, retaking lost Allied territory in Belgium, the unit earned the Presidential Unit Citation.

After World War II, Ed became a Firefighter serving the City of Haverhill, where he retired after more than 30 years of service to the city.

Ed is an avid sports fan, following the Boston teams and local American Legion Baseball. He has driven his WWII Jeep, while towing a cannon, to many Veterans' ceremonies, parades, and even burials. Every Memorial Day weekend, he and other Legion members, drive around in the Jeep to area cemeteries to ensure American flags are on every Veteran's grave. These heroes place an American Flag on the grave of any Veteran that does not have one.

Ed participates in many American Legion events, and is still very active in other Veterans organizations such as the American Veterans (Amvets) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). He is a proud retired Massachusetts Fire Fighter.

Ed first joined the West Newbury American Legion Post 240, he later transferred to Haverhill's American

Legion Post 4, he has served over fifty

METHUEN & NORTH ANDOVER

years in the American Legion, and even served as Post Commander. He is ninety-four years young and is currently serving as Post Historian for Post 4 Haverhill. Ed is enjoying a well-deserved retirement from the Haverhill Fire Department with his wife, two sons, one daughter, and a well-loved extended family.

The Valley Patriot thanks Haverhill Veterans Dave DiCeglie and Chris Manning, Chris is the current Commander of American Legion Post 4 in Haverhill, Massachusetts, for doing Ed's interview and helping to write this article. Chris invites all Veterans, of all branches, from all eras, to stop by Post 4 and join! Please bring a photocopy of your DD 214, please do not bring the original document.

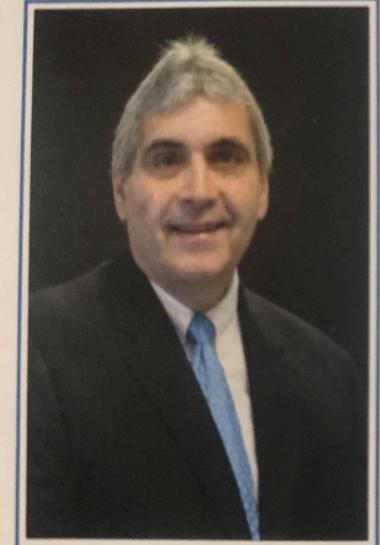
All the Merrimack Valley's American Legion Posts ask all World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Veterans, to call (603) 518-5368 and sign up for an Honor Flight to the Memorials in Washington DC! Veterans of all eras are asked to go the American Legion's Web site www.legion.org, and join the American Legion, our mission is working with Congress, Veterans, and the Community, preserving our Veteran's Benefits for future generations and serving all Veterans and their families.



John Cuddy served in the US Navy's Construction Battalions (also known as the Seabees) after retiring from the US Navy; he earned a bachelor's in history and a master's

in economics from the University of Massachusetts on the Lowell Campus. He has been employed in Logistics at FedEx for the last 26 years. If you know a World War II, Korean War, or Vietnam War Veteran who would like their story

told, please email him at John.Cuddy@valleypatriot.com



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belongs to the Planning Board as does the Master Plan. The Chair and Vice Chair of the ZBR Committee appeared at the next Selectmen meeting to plead the case of steering the course and continuing with the process that started some eighteen months prior, already behind an aggressive schedule set by the Selectmen.

The interviews were set and held for the new ZBR members, and the choices were unanimous to recommend the Chair of the Master Plan Committee, with experience on the Planning Board and regional planning. This was the choice the Selectmen Gang of Three did not desire. The ZBR Committee's recommendation was summarily dismissed. A call went out for other applicants. Mr. Warren Shaw, who stepped out of politics nearly two decades ago was disturbed by the events surrounding the attempts to scuttle the process, applied for the position. With grumblings from the Gang, he was appointed.

Over the next four months the ZBR Committee labored at the revisions aided by the Community Development Director and a zoning consultant. With Town Meeting nearing, the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen meet to review the works to make recommendations for Town Meeting. The Planning Board held its hearing and voted to recommend the seventeen

warrant articles. The response was from this executive board was doe-eyed confusion. Mind you, this is an ad hoc committee assembled by the Selectmen and overseen by the Chair. The same Selectman who stifled Heather's attempts to strengthen the ZBR Committee by replacing habitually absent members with one from the Master Plan Committee and members at large.

Chair Genest now has inserted herself into a process while being devoid of any zoning or planning knowledge or experience. She has replaced Selectman Heather Santiago Hutchings as the Selectmen representative with herself. If you did not think it ran well before, just wait until Genest gets to the helm. Although a call for public input, comments and visioning sessions have suddenly become fashionable. There are several old adages that come to mind that are all appropriate. "There is never time to do it right, but always time to do it over," may be the most appropriate. I am not sure where this all ends. The Board of Selectmen, and Chair Genest in particular, will claim saving the ZBR Committee and Dracut from a catastrophe. The ZBR Committee will now exist with nearly half of the members without experience in town planning or zoning bylaws. "The more things change, the more they stay the same." ♦

THE DOCTOR IS IN!

Disagreements

Dr. Pierre Ghassibi
VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

Greetings everyone.

Emotional illness is as important as physical disease. I hope this article will resonate with many of us. I want to look at wars.

We have wars between nations and civil wars between citizens of the same country. Burns, amputations, families dismembered, economies destroyed, are the results. These are beyond our individual control. Powerful people start them, and we all fall victims.

There are other wars that are far more common and very painful. These are the interpersonal

hostilities that seem pervasive and part of our everyday lives. Wars between office colleagues,

employees and supervisors, husbands, and wives. We have a lot of pride and small conflicts pull us apart day after day. The distances apart add up and after a while we find ourselves living with enemies. I dislike talking about this, but I see so much of it everywhere. This is how I analyze the cause:

We each have our opinions and ideas. It is in our DNA to want our way or the highway. We each are sure that we are correct, and the other person is not. Yet, who is to judge?

A referee also has his or her own opinions and has no right to take sides. Taking sides is as subjective as the opinions of the antagonists. Look at the rate of divorce and how many associates dissociate.

The solution, if we want peace, is hard, because we are all born very stubborn and refuse to consider the point of view of others. We feel and fear that if we let our spouse or associate do things their way, the outcome will be disastrous.

The solution ought to be an attitude taught in schools and in companies:

"Realize that peace, friendship, respect, and love take precedence over our opinion. Realize that conflicts with time grow in size and number and end in doom. Realize that my opinion is just my opinion and every one's opinion should be counted in any decision. This should be an agreement on paper, signed voluntarily by the involved parties and brought up often. This is realistic only if everybody genuinely wants peace and a happy association. Otherwise, one party will control by force, which is acceptable in a dictatorship, if this is what we want."

P. Ghassibi, md
ghassibi@hotmail.com ♦



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“BEEF”

Bill Cushing
VALLEY PATRIOT TV COLUMNIST

This month's recommendation is perhaps the year's most addictive new series.

Netflix's 'Beef' pulses with tension right from the start. The show opens with two strangers almost colliding in a retail store parking lot, which triggers an intense car chase between contractor Danny Cho (Oscar nominee Steven Yeun) and plant entrepreneur Amy Lau (Ali Wong) through the streets of Calabasas and sets in motion a season-long game of cat and mouse.

The strain of each of their lives has both Amy and Danny at the end of their rope. Their chance road rage encounter causes these ropes to snap. Soon after, a tense rivalry begins interlocking their lives in ways they cannot imagine.

In 10 intensely fierce and funny half-hour episodes, the intricately plotted twists and turns of this series show how Danny and Amy's determination to destroy each other entwines innocent family members: Danny's sweet kid brother Paul (Young Mazino), and Amy's equally sweet but spoiled husband George (Joseph Lee). Adding even more spice are David Choe, playing Danny's criminal cousin Isaac, and Maria Bello, as Jordan, the billionaire businesswoman Amy sees as the savior for her small business.

As Amy's and Danny's tactics escalate, the show transforms itself, too; what begins as an edgy domestic comedy becomes an increasingly serious drama and then, in the last few episodes, verges on a nightmare. Humor is there throughout, but by the end, you're watching between your fingers in case something horrific happens. I won't give anymore away, because this show is best to enter into without knowing too much about it.

'Beef' is a show that thrives on upending the viewers expectations. Just when you think you've figured it out,

the show will pivot to an unexpected moment. Keeping us grounded throughout the constantly upending plot are Amy and Danny, who are both fantastically written characters. Both are complex individuals with opposite economic comfort levels. However, they share a commonality in dealing with loneliness and holding in the frustrations of life.

The entire cast is terrific, and 'Beef' gives so much humanity and depth to every single character so that none feel like a device or a caricature in this comedy of horrors. But Steven Yeun and Ali Wong are the strongest forces here, transfixing from start to finish. Their characters shift between being confident, vulnerable, and messy, as all of us are. They may hate each other, but as an audience member, you can't help but love them. All of the show's suspense and intensity is held in this pair's performances, which are very physical on top of being complex and emotional.

As Yeun's character aptly says: "You're born. You make choices. Then suddenly you're here." This quote perfectly encapsulates what the series is really about. How each choice we make in life leads to something else and if you're not careful it can have serious consequences.

There has been no word yet on further seasons, however in an interview with Rolling Stone, the show's creator Lee Sung Jin said that he's plotted out three seasons in his head. Whether there are more seasons or not, do yourself a favor and watch 'Beef.'

All 10 episodes are available to stream on Netflix.

If you have any questions about TV, you can email me at BillsTVTalk@gmail.com. I will answer all of your questions and will feature some of the questions I receive in a future Mailbag column. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram @BillsTVTalk and on Facebook at BillsTVTalk for daily up-to-the-minute TV news and discussion. ♦

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God's Grace Never Fails! King David Encounters God's Grace— Part II

Peter Larocque
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

God's Grace Never Fails!
King David Encounters God's Grace— Part 2

God Bless you all and welcome back for Part – 2. We ended Part 1 with God sending Nathan to David to deliver a parable-like story extremely shocking that King David became loaded with anger to the point he pronounces a Death Sentence upon the guilty one in Nathan's story. We read Nathan's response in 2 Samuel 12:7, "Then Nathan said to David, "You Are the Man!" NKJV. Then Nathan delivers God's thoughts on the matter and in 2 Samuel 12:12 we read, "For you did it [sin] secretly, but I will do this thing [Grace] before all Israel, before the sun." NKJV.

King David thought by cleverly covering up his tracks he would not get caught. Without God, he most likely would have! But God is all-knowing and informs David through Nathan, that his sin will be made public for all Israel to see! Then, King David tells Nathan in the next verse, 2 Samuel 12:13, "So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." NKJV.

God immediately says and does what only He can say and do, verse 13 continues, 2 Samuel 12:13-14, "And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die." NKJV. Here we read of God's Mercy and Grace extended to King David! WOW!!! We see God's Undeserved, Unearned, and Unmerited Favor on King David, God's Grace prevails in King David's life. King David should have died, but he didn't. Unfortunately, not so for the firstborn of King David's and Bathsheba's son. On the seventh day after being born, the boy dies!

King David expresses his feelings concerning what happened and we can read about it in Psalm 51. Here are some excerpts from Psalm 51:1-4, 7-12, 14, 16-17, "Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge." "7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from

Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit." "14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness." "16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart These, O God, You will not despise." NKJV.

The Hebrew word for contrite means to be broken, bruised, crushed, or collapsed. King David was brought by God to the end of himself recognizing his sin as is clearly stated in Psalm 51.

How did King David go from being a King so full of himself to a man that realized that He is nothing without God? The key is found in the story that God gave Nathan to recite word by word to King David. What was it in this story that God used to humble this Mighty King? Nathan's story resonated with King David because as a young Shepherd boy, he was fully aware of what it meant to care for little ewe lambs. We read what lengths he would take in his care for his father's sheep in 1 Samuel 17:34-36, "But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, 35 I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it." NKJV.

King David also knew that God was with him through this as we read in 1 Samuel 17:37, "Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." NKJV.

Just like King David, we have sinned. The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," NKJV. What do we do? We Repent! Which means, having a completely radical change of mind. One minute we think this way and now we think another way. We go from believing that Jesus Christ was not who He said He was to believe that He is our Savior, The Lamb of God who takes away our sins!

We change our thinking and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior! We invite Him into our hearts and He will come in and we go from death to life!

My suggestion after this, get yourself and your family planted into a Local New Testament Church, one that preaches the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Grace of God! The final Scripture comes from Psalm 92:13, "Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God." NKJV. Amen!

Love you all,
Peter
peterlarocque@hotmail.com ♦



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Cummings Foundation Grants \$600K to Gr. Lawrence Psych. Center

LAWRENCE — Chief Executive Officer Carina Pappalardo has announced that The Psychological Center, Inc., will receive a transformational \$700,000 in grant funding from the Cummings Foundation over the next 10 years.

The Psychological Center received two separate grants this month from the Cummings Foundation — a \$100,000 grant that will be distributed over three years and a \$600,000 grant that will be distributed over 10 years — to support the general operations of the Psychological Center, which operates Women's View, Pegasus House and the Daybreak Homeless Shelter in Lawrence.

"I was left speechless when I learned about our 10-year award," said CEO Carina Pappalardo.

"Operating three unique non-profit programs in today's economy takes a lot of creativity. Rises in the cost of food, gas, utilities, staffing, supplies, renovations, and other program expenses affects us in a different way than some other businesses. We do not pass on any costs. Our agency has to absorb all of these increases through grants, fundraising, and donations. This allows us to continue to focus on what matters,

our people, and not focus on outside distractions. We are grateful to be selected and respected for the work we are blessed to be a part of. This enormous grant will always be a part of our guests' successful treatment."

The 10-year grant is especially important to expand services and capacity at the Daybreak Shelter, which currently has 50 beds for overnight guests, most of which are often full.

It will also support transitional housing at the Daybreak Shelter, an expansion, renovation, or relocation of the building, support renovations to the Pegasus House building, and renovations or a move to a new location for Women's View.

The grant funding will also support the continuance of the Journey to Resiliency Project, which will strengthen trauma-informed care, programming, and services, as well as longer stays for guests at Daybreak Shelter, Women's View, and Pegasus House.

Funding will also be used to create a street outreach and community outreach team to help reach those in need of assistance, and to make resources provided by The Psychological Center more well-known and more accessible to those in need. ♦



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